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Agenda item 3
Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation: follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly

CONSOLIDATED LIST OF ISSUES RELATED TO THE COORDINATION OF OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The present annotated list of issues has been prepared for the consideration of the Economic and Social Council by the United Nations funds and programmes, in consultation with the United Nations Development Group and the agencies of the United Nations system, in compliance with paragraph 4 Of Council decision 98/27.

I. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFORM PROGRAMME OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND THE PROVISIONS OF THE TRIENNIAL COMPREHENSIVE POLICY REVIEW

Structures and mechanisms

During 1999, the United Nations Development Group, including its subsidiary bodies – both formal and ad hoc – were further consolidated, inter alia through sunset clauses for the technical sub-groups. The subsidiary bodies of the UNDG produced numerous concrete results and prepared matters for decision-making by the executive heads of the member entities of UNDG.

Based on its review of the reports of the funds and programmes, the Council may wish to:

(a) Take note of the problems encountered and lessons learned in enhancing the structures and mechanisms for United Nations reform and inter-agency coordination;

(b) Welcome the ongoing efforts by the UNDG to rationalize the architecture of its subgroups and to promote greater knowledge management as a way to reduce meetings, lighten structures and permit more effective coordination;

(c) Encourage the members of the UNDG to seek further ways to rationalize the work of their subgroups and to further streamline and simplify mechanisms within country teams so as to reduce the burden on both country teams and national counterparts;

(d) Reaffirm the need for continued, close cooperation between UNDG members and the subsidiary bodies of ACC, especially CCPOQ, as well as the need for the follow-up to the recent review of ACC to address the issue of linkages between ACC and the UNDG and the other United Nations Executive Committees.

Resident coordinator system

Specific progress was achieved in 1999 in the resident coordinator system in such areas as the selection process of resident coordinators. Within the ACC machinery, particularly through the Working Group on the Resident Coordinator, additional results such as the adoption of the ACC guidelines on the functioning of the Resident Coordinator system were attained. Issues requiring further attention include, inter alia, improving the gender and agency balance of resident coordinators, further improving the performance appraisal system for resident coordinators, inter alia through greater participation by United Nations system agencies in the appraisal process, as well as the need for providing for government inputs into the work of thematic groups within the resident coordinator system.

Based on its review of the reports of the funds and programmes, the Council may wish to:

(a) Welcome the progress achieved so far in strengthening the resident coordinator system, and the efforts made towards an increased sense of ownership of the system by funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations; and encourage further steps to broaden the pool of resident coordinators;

(b) Take note of efforts under way, through the UNDG and the ACC machinery, to improve the gender balance of resident coordinators and invite the funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system to make further efforts to increase and monitor their nominations of qualified women candidates for resident coordinator vacancies;

(c) Invite agencies of the United Nations system to strengthen their participation in the resident coordinator appraisal system;

(d) Take note of the efforts under way regarding self-assessment of the country team as a whole, based on the work-planning exercise connected with preparation of the annual report of the resident coordinator system.

(e) Call on the funds and programmes to ensure that more streamlined coordination mechanisms and processes result in better and more effective programme delivery.

(f) Call for the further development and strengthening of country-level coordination mechanisms, such as thematic groups, and welcome the participation of governments in these mechanisms, as appropriate.

Implementation of the common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework

Steady progress was achieved in terms of the roll-out of the CCA/UNDAFs in 1999, including the ACC statement on the involvement of the United Nations system in this process. However, it is still necessary to encourage faster progress in the development of individual UNDAFs to take full advantage of the projected harmonization of programme cycles. Other issues related to process and content include: feeding the experiences of the pilot efforts into the new CCA/UNDAF exercises; ensuring a more consistent level of quality in the CCAs and UNDAFs; and greater involvement of non-resident agencies.

Based on its review of the reports of the funds and programmes, the Council may wish to:

(a) Take note of the progress on implementation of the CCA/UNDAF process, including the training of resource persons, encourage the feedback of lessons learned into future CCA/UNDAFs of the roll-out phase and urge funds and programmes to continue to review their programming processes, with a view to streamlining and simplification so as to reduce the administrative and financial costs to the Government as well as to the United Nations system;

(b) Reaffirm the lead role of Governments and urge all United Nations system partners to strengthen their participation in the CCA/UNDAF process;

(c) Urge that there be complementarity between the UNDAF and other nationally-agreed strategic instruments for development;

(d) Take note of the importance of data collection and indicators in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the CCA/UNDAF processes and recommend that resources be made available on a more predictable, systematic and planned basis to undertake the complex work in this area.

(e) Reaffirm the importance of the evaluation of the programmatic impact of the CCA/UNDAF mechanism, as requested in para.63 of General Assembly resolution 53/192;

(f) Reaffirm the importance of taking account of the regional, global and inter-regional dimensions of development in the preparation of the CCA and UNDAF.

Harmonization of programming periods and procedures

The UNDG in 1999 made significant progress in the areas of joint mid-term reviews, harmonization of personnel payments, harmonization of programming instruments and of programming periods. Furthermore, the UNDG, in consultation with resident coordinators and country teams, identified several areas where procedures could be simplified, including country programme and framework formats, realignment of monitoring and evaluation stages, more uniform project implementation procedures, compatible information technology and databases on United Nations activities; common premises guidelines and harmonized security operations.

Based on its review of the reports of the funds and programmes, the Council may wish to:

(a) Note the progress achieved by UNDG members so far in harmonizing their programming periods, as well as to some extent in harmonizing their procedures, and encourage UNDG members to take the necessary steps to further such harmonization and to ensure that it can be sustained;

(b) Request the funds and programmes, as part of their preparations for the triennial policy review of 2001, to assess the extent to which the harmonization of programming periods has benefited programme countries through greater coordination and synergy in programme design and implementation;

(c) Encourage the members of the UNDG, in the light of the discussions on this subject at the Council, to address the areas for further simplification and harmonization of procedures, identified in consultation with resident coordinators and country teams, and to report back to the Council at its next substantive session with concrete results in each area.

(d) Urge further monitoring of the harmonization processes, particularly at the country level.

Cooperation with the World Bank

With the emergence of new planning and programme instruments of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, coordination by national authorities of the processes of preparation of these instruments becomes crucial so as to avoid duplication of national and international efforts.

Based on its review of the reports of the funds and programmes, the Council may wish to:

(a) Take note of and encourage the ongoing dialogue of UNDG members with the Bretton Woods institutions regarding the CCA/UNDAF, the CDF, the PRSP, and the PRGF, fully recognizing the primary coordinating role of programme country governments as well as the distinct legislative mandates of the respective institutions and instruments, and to report back on this dialogue to the Council at its substantive session 2001, especially in the context of the preparations for the triennial policy review;

(b) Recognize that the CCA constitutes a valuable analytical tool around which to plan and organize system-wide activities related to poverty eradication, which is now recognized as a fundamental goal for operational activities for development;

(c) Invite the Bretton Woods institutions to collaborate further with the United Nations in the CCA and UNDAF exercises;

(d) Invite national authorities to use the CCA itself as well as other United Nations instruments as a basis for formulating the CDF and the PRSPs so as to avoid duplication of effort and additional burdens on national counterparts in terms of data collection and situation analysis;

(e) Encourage optimization and cohesion in the reporting requirements of the various UNDG members on the issue of collaboration with the World Bank so as to avoid increased workloads at the country level;

II. FOLLOW-UP TO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

The current series of five-year reviews of the United Nations conferences provides member states and the United Nations system with a fresh opportunity to review and strengthen both the integrated and coordinated follow-up to the conferences as well as the follow-up to individual conferences.

Based on its review of the reports of the funds and programmes, the Council may wish to:

(a) Note the progress of the resident coordinator system in assisting governments in the integrated and coordinated follow-up to global conferences and encourage further work by country-level theme groups to address the three areas highlighted by the Council in its resolution 1998/44: poverty eradication, social development and the 20/20 initiative and the role of civil society in conference follow-up;

(b) Re-emphasize the need to link follow-up to individual conferences, including the five-year reviews, to the integrated follow-up to all conferences;

(c) Call for review documents and other preparatory activities to fully reflect linkages between conferences; and

(d) Call upon Governments, in their leadership of the follow-up to individual conferences, to ensure the cross-cutting dimension and linkages with the other conferences, with the full involvement of all stakeholders including the bilateral donors, the Bretton Woods institutions and civil society.

III. FOLLOW-UP TO SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE: AGREED CONCLUSIONS

Actively addressing the linkages between (a) operational activities for development and (b)special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance is crucial at the present time both at the inter-governmental as well as the inter-agency levels because of the large number of countries in special circumstances where, in addition to emergency relief, development must remain a priority. Achieving all possible synergies between the operational activities and humanitarian segments of the Council would be particularly important in this regard.

Based on its review of the reports of the funds and programmes, the Council may wish to provide guidance along the following lines:

(a) Take note of the ongoing efforts within the United Nations Secretariat to achieve a closer integration of relief, reconstruction, rehabilitation and development and to encourage further progress in line with recommendations of the agreed conclusions of the humanitarian segment of 1999; encourage

further joint meetings of the Executive Committees of the United Nations; as well as call for the further strengthening of early warning systems, of preparedness planning for complex emergencies and of coordinated responses to natural disasters ;

(b) Recognize the CCA as the building block for both the CAP and the UNDAF; invite the Security Council and call on the United Nations Secretariat, in analysing approaches to transition, to integrate a development dimension in order to eradicate the root causes of the crisis, prevent recurrence and contribute to human development;

(c) Encourage UNDG members to develop further their dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions especially to ensure that adjustment processes are peace- and poor-friendly, as well as with other international key actors in the framework of other mechanisms and forums, such as the IASC and the relevant entities of the ACC machinery such as CCPOQ, in order to ensure a more coherent and coordinated approach to relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development;

(d) Encourage entities of the United Nations system to ensure that both development programmes and emergency relief efforts take a comprehensive and collaborative approach to and provide special protection measures for women, children and other vulnerable groups in emergencies, including internally displaced persons, and provide for health and education initiatives for them, while at the same time recognizing these marginalized groups, not only as passive victims but as positive agents of change;

(e) Call for all possible measures to protect United Nations staff and respect the privileges and immunities granted under international law;